Question: Why does the approach of November make revolutionary hearts heavy?

Answer: We were subjected to the worst defeat in our history on the 13th of November 1989. On that day our beloved leader and the founder of the People's Liberation Front Comrade Rohana Wijeweera was assassinated in cold blood while under arrest by the illegal, anti-democratic, murderous Government run by the enemies of the people. It was during that black month of November that the most deadly stage of the cruel repression against Sri Lankan youth who fought for freedom, democracy and social justice was operating. During that Black November a large number of members of our party's political committee as well as many other activists and associates were arrested and tortured. The illegal and murderous regime assassinated every single one of them. They made the earth run red with the blood of revolutionists who loved this country and its people. They threw out the corpses at along the road at every junction as fodder for crows and dogs.

Therefore every November that has followed causes the scars in our hearts to burn again, along with a massive burden to right those wrongs.

That was the moment at which we had lost the creator of our party along with other leaders, activists and well-wishers. The very existence of our party was severely threatened at that time. That's one side of the story.

The other side is the challenge that we faced in taking the red flag fallen from the grasp of Comrade Rohana Wijeweera as well as all the other comrades we lost and raising it high again. This burden had to be added to the hearts of everyone who survived as if on a whim of fate.

With every passing November this burden grows heavier, Therefore it is essential to summon
up new courage and strength as time passes.

Question: When did you last meet Comrade Rohana Wijeweera?

Answer: On the 12th of November 1989. That was the last day of the last political bureau session held under the leadership of Comrade Rohana Wijeweera. It was held at the Araliyawatte house, on the Peradeniya - Galaha Road. We only used that house for meetings of the political committee. At that time Comrade Rohana and his family lived in the St. Mary estate of Ulapane. There was a secure shortcut from that place to Araliyawatte, enabling travel to Araliyawatte while avoiding main roads in less time.

Question: How do you remember the 12th of November 1989 and the following days?

Answers: This question cannot be answered briefly. But it is necessary here to give a brief and concise answer and therefore skip over many relevant points.

We didn’t end the session because we had not finished discussing every item on the agenda. We decided to end the session and leave Araliyawatte based on a piece of bad news that we received. This is the synopsis of a long discussion during the session.
Comrade Rohana Wijeweera left for Ulapane. All other members of the political committee except Comrade H.B. Herath left the house. On the same day after a short while, the security forces had stormed the premises and arrested Comrade Herath.

On that same fateful 12th of November, Comrade Rohana Wijeweera was arrested at St. Mary’s estate in Ulapane in the evening and brought to Colombo. Comrade Upatissa Gamanayake was also arrested, in Bandaragama.

On the 13th, at around 5pm, Sri Lanka Rupavahini broadcast the miserable and tragic news that an overwhelming majority of the population could not, and were not ready to, bear. Rohana Wijeweera arrested. While escorting security forces to an arms cache there was a gunfight between Rohana Wijeweera and H.B. Herath and Rohana Wijeweera is killed. This was the massive lie fed to the public by the incumbent regime.

I know that I’m not the only one who was thunderstruck when I heard this news. This cannot be. A massive shock, I could not think. The heartbeat stopped.

That was the most challenging moment I have ever faced in my life. That was the most challenging period, the most tragic moment. That period was my trial by fire, when we were hit with defeat after defeat. The enemy was becoming more reckless in their sole ambition of eradicating the People’s Liberation Front from the face of the earth.

On the other hand that was the time period when the party was overrun with doubt and confusion, when its crumbling was the swiftest. The time when hope both in the people and in future victories, ran dry in some members of the party.

And all of us survivors had to operate very carefully and immediately despite this very challenging, unfavourable and dangerous time period.

From the moment that Comrade Rohana was assassinated I worked towards coordination with
the other members of the political bureau. There I made a mistake too, when I went to visit Comrade Gamanayake without knowing that he had been arrested. In those times the security forces would stay behind after they arrested our comrades to arrest any suspicious visitors. For some reason they weren’t at Comrade Gamanayake’s house. I understood what had happened. Then I went to Comrade Wanasinghe’s house. When I was nearing the house I reached a message that Comrade Warnasinghe too had been arrested, and the security forces were still at his house. That was the day my life was truly saved.

From the day of Comrade Rohana Wijeweera’s assassination the connections of our leaders and activists were always under scrutiny.

Question: How did you face the challenge of rebuilding the party after the assassinations of Comrade Rohana and other leaders?

Answer: That too is a long story which has to be summarised here. Even before Comrade Rohana Wijeweera was murdered the party was facing challenges. Even then the party was facing unprecedented repression by the Government. Assassination squads backed by the Government recklessly killed thousands.

Some weaklings of the party collapsed and betrayed our activists. The general populace was scared for their lives when faced with the bloody repression orchestrated by the enemies of the people.

When Comrade Rohana Wijeweera was killed the challenges facing the party increased exponentially. “Rohana Wijeweera is the People’s Liberation Front and the People’s Liberation Front is Rohana Wijeweera. Therefore when Rohana Wijeweera is gone there can be no People’s Liberation Front, it is finished.” That was the spiel spun out by the enemies to the rest of the country. In a very short time after the murder of Comrade Rohana Wijeweera, every other
member of the political bureau except me was murdered. Every action taken to rebuild the party broke down. The party was riven. Some were in prison, some had gone into hiding, and others had escaped abroad. An unfavourable situation existed regardless of the place or time.

One of the biggest challenges for the party at that time was trying to progress while being tangled up in archaic plans of operation.

There are always opportunities in conjunction with challenges. The greater the challenge the greater the scope of the accompanying opportunities.

A minuscule fragment of a longer speech made by Comrade Rohana while under arrest was broadcast on the day that he was murdered. The enemies could only show that scrap of footage that day. This is what Comrade Rohana told us in those two or three minutes; “Change all the plans now. Work towards ensuring the democratic rights of all parties.”

We interpreted that message correctly and acted accordingly to separate ourselves from the old plans. At that time there were opposing opinions within the party but the correct message triumphed.

The party was a shambles. Various cliques arose within the different sections of the party, along with doubt and increasing distance between them. The brotherhood was tarnished. To raise the party from its ruins a concerted and united effort from all the remaining groups of the party was required. We survivors were able to accomplish that task.

I must repeat what I said before; when the challenges facing us grow in magnitude, the opportunities facing us also grow correspondingly. What’s needed is to correctly identify the challenges, which then enables us to identify the opportunities.
Question: What is your interpretation of Comrade Rohana Wijeweera as a revolutionary?

Answer: Comrade Wijeweera was born to a proletarian family. His father was an activist of the Communist Party of Sri Lanka. Even though the Communist Party was dishonest Comrade Rohana’s father was honest. Therefore he told his son to never choose politics as his occupation. His father had understood that the Sri Lankan political arena was a stinking swamp. Undoubtedly he came to this realisation by his own experiences in the Communist Party and experiencing that every party was mired in corruption and backward practices. But he lacked the ability and the vision to participate in a political movement beyond the existing parties. Maybe that was why he settled on making his son a medical doctor.

While in the communist USSR to become a doctor, the junior Wijeweera sees a socialist society, even with its deficiencies, with his own eyes. Although he was there to learn medical science he finds himself drawn to politics.

In my opinion this was the moment that Rohana Wijeweera the great revolutionary came into existence. He had the facility to use the sweat and tears of the Soviet people for his own purpose, become a proficient doctor and amass a fortune in Sri Lanka. He let go of that ‘superfluous man’. In my opinion this was his first revolutionary departure. This was in direct contradiction to the existing tradition, and exceeded it, by being more useful to a whole country and even the world instead of benefitting a few individuals.

If Comrade Rohana Wijeweera thought that the communism of the Soviet land should be established in Sri Lanka and gathered the required information that in itself is revolutionary. My position is that he became the ‘great revolutionary’ when he became determined to introduce the new and better system to Sri Lanka instead of the decrepit existing system.

Comrade Rohana Wijeweera had the strength to butt heads against the imposing monolith that was the Communist Party of the Soviet Union while still within the Soviet borders because even at that time he had understood what opportunism was and therefore become unshakeable. He relinquished the scholarships and benefits he enjoyed as a result of relinquishing selfish opportunism.
When he came back to Sri Lanka he refused his father’s demands. He told Comrade Wijeweera to avoid politics. But Comrade Wijeweera chose the political field, but not his father’s opportunistic politics, but true revolutionary politics, which had been non-existent in Sri Lanka at that time. He is the first professional revolutionary of Sri Lanka, the pioneer of the Sri Lankan revolutionary movement. Since this is a brief discussion, I will stop here. But I must briefly explain the responsibility fulfilled by Comrade Rohana. The Lankan plutocrats assumed power in 1948, with the blessings of the British Empire, who had ruined this country. Only five years passed since then, which is a very short time period. In these five years they displayed their utter inability to rebuild the country, culminating in their retreat against the people’s opposition in the 1953 hartal. From that moment onwards the capitalist regime operated in the manner of a failed class. It needs to be emphasized here that opportunists supported this regime. Comrade Rohana Wijeweera dedicated his life to defeat his regime which failed the country as well as its people, and furthering the socialist revolution since 1965. He didn’t build yet another traditional, weak political party. He built a political party for the proletariat, becoming a pioneer for the proletarian class and its political ambitions.

Question: How would you explain the role of the modern revolutionary at the present time when the democracy of the country is being threatened?

Answer: First, we must clarify how democracy is threatened and to what extent.

What should President Mahinda Rajapakse and the Government have done after defeating separatist terrorism in May 2009? What had he promised the people? to establish democracy, national unity, and peace throughout the land.

With the triumph of May 2009, the President had total control over achieving this goal with the full support of the people. He had the opportunity to organise the people. He knowingly spurned every chance.
He had, and still has, no goal for the country or the people. His sole aim is to establish the power of his family. He prioritised this, and held corrupt presidential and general elections in order to achieve this.

He managed to get the 18th Amendment approved, and thereby removing the two term restriction of the presidency. He cancelled the 17th Amendment to abolish independent commissions, thereby marking the end of free and fair elections. To accomplish this he arranged a 2/3rds majority in the Parliament using bribes and intimidation. This resulted in a change of the parliament’s composition, subverting the public opinion and violating the sovereignty of the people.

And don’t forget that the same Mahinda Rajapakse who swore that he would revoke the executive presidency before the 18th of November 2011 has now revoked the term restriction placed on the executive presidency.

The value of democracy in this moment in time when democratic rights are being eroded away has to be considered. The country’s regime can be held to account only if the country’s democracy is strong. Similarly, bureaucratic transparency and good governance will only be established if democracy is strong. State services, security forces and election commissions will only be independent if democracy is strong. The balance between the executive, constitutional and legal agencies of the Government is only preserved if democracy is strong.

A country lacking democracy can never achieve economic or political victories. There can be no new ideas or inventions where there is no freedom or democracy. How can a country move forward in such a situation?

The people have been deceived about the true extent of this situation. To this end, journalists and the media have been intimidated, leading to ignorance among the people about the true situation.

But the Rajapakses have not won. Look where Mahinda Rajapakse was on the 19th of May 2009. He was at the peak of his popularity. His face was on every street light, tree, stone or
vehicle. He was the unofficial king of the country.

After just 17 months, the king has been dragged down from his palace into the gutter by the people.

But the people have not yet fully understood the extent of the economic, political and social crisis facing the country. Therefore the People’s Liberation Front is doing its utmost to educate, organise and mobilise the people against the Rajapakse regime and the fake opposition of the United National Party.

Question: How important is the need to change the existing social system?

Answer: When considering local and international factors, there is no compelling reason not to change the existing the capitalist system.

Now more than ever it is evident that capitalism cannot effectively fulfil basic human needs. Foremost among these are food. 22,116 people die around the world each day from starvation. In other words, a person dies of starvation every 4 seconds. This appalling statistic can be eradicated by producing more food. But the capitalist system cannot achieve this, and indeed it does not want to. It exists only for profit, not to solve human problems. The modern world which has achieved massive technological breakthroughs is unable to fulfil needs for food, medicine and shelter. The capitalist system which has failed to fulfil them cannot fulfil them in the future. Even if it can do so in a few more years, we can wait. But at this time global capitalism is stuck in a massive downturn and attendant crises. The most highly developed capitalist countries such as the United States, Japan, and countries of Western Europe are now cutting more and more public benefits. The retirement age of 60 has been raised to 62 or 65 and people are forced to continue working. When they arise in opposition they’re shot at, tear gassed, assaulted and imprisoned. This is the capitalist solution. Capitalism has entered its final phase.
But people are continually opposing it, and fighting it until they are victorious.

If developed countries are struggling, Sri Lanka’s situation need not be elaborated. Mahinda Rajapakse is spewing complete lies about the country’s development. Here is our actual situation. 41.6% of our population subsists on a daily wage of less than 300 rupees. It needs no elaboration as to how far 300 rupees will go in the existent economic climate. Therefore nearly half of the population has to live in near starvation.

Half of them are not living, but slowly dying. Their income is critically low. According to the Government 20% of the population earn 4.6% of the total revenue of the country. Therefore roughly one fifth of the population gets one twentieth of the income. A further 40% of the population earns 13.2% of the income. But the 20% of the population with the highest income earns 54.7% of the country’s revenue. That alone is enough to comprehend the income disparity in our society. We are living in a country where one fifth of the population is struggling not to starve. The President has no qualm about this.

Additionally, 29.4% of children aged five or under suffer from malnutrition. Therefore roughly one third of our children have fallen victim to malnutrition. There are a myriad of other problems facing the country. The capitalist Rajapakse regime cannot extricate themselves or the country from the economic abyss into which they have piloted the country. Look at the immense amount of loans and interest Sri Lanka must pay back to other countries and organisations.

During the year of 2009, local debt was Rs. 401.3 billion, and foreign debt was Rs. 114.7 billion, and the total is Rs. 516 billion. In addition, the interest required locally was Rs. 274 billion and the interest required abroad was Rs. 35.7 billion, totalling to Rs. 309.7 billion.

When the loans and the interest are summed the total is Rs. 825.7 billion. The Government’s total annual income was Rs. 728.6 billion. The problem is crystal clear. The income cannot cover the loans.

So what does the President do? He must operate according to the IMF. Income must be boosted while debts must be paid off. What does the Government do to achieve this? Does it increase production? No. Instead they take the easiest route, and increase taxes and implement new taxes. Then they cut funds for education and health benefits. When taxes are increased the
overall cost of goods and services go up. That directly affects the people.

But the other cuts aren’t felt so keenly by the people. Free education is now a burden for the Government. Therefore the United National Party Government of the time tried to palm it off to the private sector. But due to intense opposition they abandoned that effort. They tried repeatedly after that but they failed.

Now the Rajapakse Government has launched the newest version yet. The biggest burdens on the Government are the universities. They have no funds to spend on improvement. Therefore the universities have to be closed down, or the intake has to be reduced. Instead of this, the Government is now on a mission to stop free education in universities. The Government knows fully well that the first opposition to this plan will arise from within the universities. Therefore they incite the students. The minister chosen for this purpose is a person who’s even been jailed for contempt of court. He is one whose very words bring destruction. The President’s choice was not made at random. Now the university student has been made into a criminal. They have turned the university student struggling for the preservation of free education into a criminal and covertly taking steps to cancel free education. Parents must be aware of this situation.

Even now the rich capitalist countries of Europe have embarked on a benefit trimming scheme. This scheme is not limited to two or three years, but is expected to go on for several decades. There were countless marches and protests against this scheme in most European countries. Millions of people took to the streets to join these protests. An incendiary atmosphere developed in France. Millions of students are marching. The opposition of the people is sweeping through the whole of Europe. Capitalism today is only capable of violating the rights of the people, and the people know this.

The financial crisis of the United States shows no signs of abating. If the only solution left to capitalism today is trimming benefits the people should no longer tolerate this system. The system must be defeated as soon as possible. Mankind has a viable alternative. That alternative is socialism. Let us organise, and fight for socialism.